

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method of managing custom data during an electronic purchase, the method comprising:
 - selecting an item for purchase;
 - determining a set of attributes for the item;
 - comparing the set of attributes to a set of keys; and
 - displaying a custom data form if the set of attributes matches the set of keys.
2. The method of claim 1, wherein the selecting step comprises:
 - adding the item to an electronic shopping cart;
 - selecting to checkout the electronic shopping cart; and
 - obtaining purchase information for the electronic purchase.
3. The method of claim 2, wherein the custom data form is displayed after the obtaining step.
4. The method of claim 1, further comprising generating the custom data form for the item.
5. The method of claim 1, further comprising obtaining custom data using the custom data form.
6. The method of claim 5, further comprising storing the obtained custom data in a database.

7. The method of claim 6, wherein the storing step comprises:

concatenating custom data obtained using at least two input fields in the custom data form;

storing the concatenated custom data as a large object in the database.

8. The method of claim 7, further comprising parsing the concatenated custom data to determine the custom data obtained for one of the at least two fields.

9. The method of claim 1, wherein the custom data form is displayed once for a plurality of items that match the set of keys.

10. A method of managing custom data during an electronic purchase, the method comprising:

- selecting an item for purchase;
- obtaining purchase information for the item;
- determining a set of attributes for the item;
- comparing the set of attributes to a set of keys;
- displaying a custom data form if the set of attributes matches the set of keys;
- obtaining custom data using at least one input field in the custom data form; and
- storing the obtained custom data and purchase information in a database.

11. The method of claim 10, wherein the storing step comprises:

- concatenating custom data obtained for a plurality of input fields;
- storing the concatenated custom data as a large object in the database.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the storing step further comprises storing an entry in a custom data group table for a custom data group, wherein the custom data group includes each item in the electronic purchase that matches the set of keys.

13. The method of claim 12, wherein the storing step further comprises:

- storing the large object in an entry in a group custom data table if the custom data form is displayed once for the custom data group; and
- storing the large object in an entry in an item custom data table if the custom data form is displayed for each item in the custom data group.

14. A system for managing custom data during an electronic purchase, the system comprising:

- a selection system for allowing a user to select an item for purchase;
- an attribute system for determining a set of attributes for the item;
- a key system for comparing the set of attributes to a set of keys; and
- a form system for displaying a custom data form if the set of attributes matches the set of keys.

15. The system of claim 14, further comprising a checkout system for obtaining purchase information for the item.

16. The system of claim 14, further comprising a storage system for storing custom data, wherein the form system further obtains the custom data using the custom data form.

17. The system of claim 16, wherein the storage system includes:

- a custom data group table for storing an entry for a custom data group, wherein the custom data group includes each item in the electronic purchase that matches the set of keys;
- a group custom data table for storing an entry for the custom data for the custom data group if the custom data form is displayed once for the custom data group; and
- an item custom data table for storing an entry for the custom data for each item in the custom data group if the custom data form is displayed once for each item in the custom data group.

18. A computer program product stored on a recordable medium for managing custom data during an electronic purchase, which when executed comprises:

- program code for allowing a user to select an item for purchase;
- program code for determining a set of attributes for the item;
- program code for comparing the set of attributes to a set of keys; and
- program code for displaying a custom data form if the set of attributes matches the set of keys.

19. The computer program product of claim 18, further comprising:

- program code for obtaining purchase information for the item;
- program code for obtaining custom data using the custom data form; and
- program code for storing the custom data and the purchase information.

20. The computer program product of claim 19, further comprising program code for processing the custom data.